The following measurements were taken:— wing: 59 mm.; weight: 9.00 gms. (1800 G.M.T.). Primaries: 4th longest; 3rd and 5th equal and 0.5 mm. shorter; 6th and 7th, 1.5 mm. shorter; thus the 2nd fell between 6th and 7th.

The following dark-coloured species of *Phylloscopi* were ruled out for the reasons given:— *fuligiventer* (1st primary too short and 2nd too long, and moreover has more yellow on supercilium and underparts); *fuscatus* (2nd primary too long, etc.); *neglectus* (the wing formula is wrong and the bird too large). It was decided at the time, and again after more careful study of the notes later, that in spite of some minor inconsistencies of wing formula, the bird must be an aberrant Chiffchaff with marked deposition of melanin in its plumage pigmentation. Mr. Kenneth Williamson, to whom I sent the original notes, agrees with this identification, and has suggested it was a female, remotely *collybita*, much more probably *abietinus*.

The African Jacana, *Actophilornis africanus* (Gmelin)

by C. David Simpson

Received 23rd December, 1960

The following notes supplement those by Pitman (*Bull. Brit. Orn. Cl.* 80(6), 1960: 103–105). In a small bay on the Kariba Lake, 27th September 1960, two adult African Jacanas (*Actophilornis africanus*) were feeding on the exotic weed *Salvinia auriculata* which already covers so much of the lake. Hoping to get some photographs, I waded into the weed and hid behind a bush to wait for the birds to come within range of my camera.

One of the pair soon flew off, but the second remained, when I saw that it had four tiny chicks. I took some photographs and was sitting quite still when I heard a clicking whistle behind me. I turned round and found that the bird which had flown off was within ten feet of me. It was apparently quite unafraid but extremely curious. It made a half circle around me in a series of movements, standing perfectly still while watching me, then stalking a few yards before stopping to look again. I did not disturb it and it slowly fed along towards its mate.

I managed to circle around the bay unseen by the birds and stalked up to them once again behind a small bush. The chicks, along with what was presumably the mother, were on a small peninsula of salvinia, and as the family would have to pass within ten feet of me to get out onto the main mass of salvinia, I settled down to wait for some more photographs.

At this stage I must have moved, as the mother saw me and flew off in alarm. The chicks immediately crouched down, snuggling into the hollows in the salvinia, then crept extremely slowly towards a small tuft of grass emergent from the salvinia. The mother had in the meantime flown about thirty-five yards, landed on the salvinia and begun an interesting distraction-behaviour. She jumped up and fluttered through the air for a few feet, then 'collapsed' on the surface of the salvinia, uttering a quavering shrill piping note. She then lay for about a minute on her breast, the wings stretched horizontally, fluttering and vibrating them from time to time. As I kept quite still, she got up, ran towards me, taking a short flapping run and then collapsed again, repeating the previous behaviour-pattern.

A. Jacana mother with chicks (note erected feathers on her nape)

B. Jacana chick hiding in salvinia

This manoeuvre was repeated twice more, the bird coming closer on each occasion. On the last occasion, however, she staggered along, weaving on her feet with one wing trailing (similar movement to a rooster displaying to a hen). She then collapsed again and lay weakly flapping her horizontally stretched wings. She next rolled over, half on her side, held the other wing up in the air at an angle and at the same time pushed herself along at an angle.

The entire display lasted about five minutes on each occasion, then the bird would stand up perfectly normally, peck at a few bits of weed and launch into the behaviour-pattern once again, the shrill piping being uttered at short intervals.

The bird calmed down after about thirty minutes, got up from the end point of the display and began making her way towards the grass tuft where the chicks were sheltering. She did not go there directly, but approached in a series of zig-zag movements. The call had changed to a series of short chatters, completely different to the piping during distraction-activity. At this new call the chicks got up and looked around, but did not leave the cover of the grass clump.

At this juncture I must have moved, as the mother suddenly flew off and the chicks crouched down becoming motionless. She did not indulge in any more distraction-activity but worked her way cautiously back to the chicks. As she got to the clump, they came out and I managed a family group photograph (see A). She then led them off slowly over the salvinia.

I might point out here that what was presumably the male took no part in either the distraction-behaviour or in leading the young, but merely walked about feeding in the vicinity of the female.

I waited until the birds were out of sight behind some bushes before I went back to the shore. I then stalked the female and young. The chicks immediately hid under a small bush, and the female began the distraction-behaviour again. As the water was only two or three inches deep, I followed her and found that she would let me get extremely close before she moved away, wing trailing with a marked stagger. All the distraction pattern mentioned before was repeated, also including short, jerky flights of two or three yards.

I next went over to the bush under which the chicks were hiding and watched them for a short period. They lay perfectly still, crouched flat on the salvinia, but with their large legs held up at an angle of 45° from the horizontal. The growth was too thick for them to dive or hide under the weed, as mentioned in Pitman's note. I moved the surrounding leaves and twigs away, letting the sunlight play through directly onto them. They did not move, even when prodded with a twig.

I next caught a chick and examined it. Its body-size was that of a small domestic fowl's egg, the legs about $2\frac{1}{2}$ inches long from junction with body to base of tarsus and the feet with claws about 1 inch in length. The legs were a dark grey grading into browny-pink towards the feet. The background colour of the down was an off white with chestnut stripes down the back, the head chestnut with white sides. The beak was pale pinky grey. During the examination the chick made no move or sound, but on being picked up initially and on release, it struggled and gave a few

cheeps. I then left the bush and watched the mother. She came back crouching down with her wings spread. The chicks went underneath her. She got up and stalked off in a crouched position and I distinctly saw a leg of one of the chicks sticking out from under one wing.

She went about seventy yards but soon deposited the chicks by simply opening her wings. The whole family then began to feed again on the salvinia.

An observation communicated to me by C.C. Tait seems to indicate the advantage of the dorsal stripes in chicks. In Natal, Tait observed three chicks all behaving in the same way, grasping longitudinally a broad-bladed sedge-leaf, with only the nostrils and bill above the water-level, and the body pressed into the V of the blade. The dorsal stripes were thus in line with the ribbing of the blade. The tarsi and feet were bent forwards clasping the blade, the feet reaching to the sides of the head.

I am indebted to my colleague C. W. Benson for his assistance in the preparation of this note, and to L. A. Titchener, of the Northern Rhodesia Information Department, for assistance in the preparation of the photographs. Also R. I. G. Attwell, of my department, to whom a copy of this note in draft has been shown, informs me that he has made generally similar observations at Lundazi, Northern Rhodesia, in March 1955.

Jacanas and other birds perching on hippo

by C. W. Benson

(*Received 23rd December, 1960*)

Simpson's note immediately above has prompted me to bring together various records previously unpublished, by members of my department, of birds perching on the Hippopotamus (*Hippopotamus amphibius*), especially as North (*Ibis*, 1944: 171–176) makes no definite mention of it being used for perching by any species of bird.

On 29th August 1960, on the Lufupa River, Kafue National Park, W. F. H. Ansell saw two African Jacanas (*Actophilornis africanus*) standing on the heads and backs of partially submerged hippo for several minutes. On 27th September 1960, on the Lochinvar Ranch stretch of the Kafue River, J. J. Soulsby saw one perched for nearly one minute on the head of a hippo showing just above the surface of the water. J. M. C. Uys has a record of a Goliath Heron (*Ardea goliath*) perched for about one minute on the back of a hippo standing in shallow water in the Kafue River, in the Kafue National Park on 23rd September 1960. He has a similar observation for an African Pied Wagtail (*Motacilla aguimp*), 16th August 1960. In July 1954 R. I. G. Attwell, in the Nsefu Game Reserve, Luangwa Valley, observed three cattle-egrets (*Ardeola ibis*) perched on the back of a single hippo, remaining thereon as it waded concealed through a channel in a pan for at least fifty yards.

B. L. Mitchell, in August 1957, on a rocky stretch of the Kafue River near Meshiteshi, watched two White-collared Pratincoles (*Glareola nuchalis*) which remained on the head of a hippo for several minutes, the animal being otherwise completely submerged. Also, one day in May 1957, between 4.30 and 5.15 p.m., on the Zambesi some forty miles above the Victoria Falls, he watched two Reed-Cormorants (*Phalacrocorax africanus*) accompanying a school of six hippo, fishing in their vicinity. When not